

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.(Currently Amended) A process for providing a protective coating on a substrate comprising

(1) applying to the substrate a coating composition comprising an homogeneous mixture comprising an inorganic sol and polymerisable organic species, wherein the inorganic sol is ~~obtainable~~ obtained by hydrolysis of first and second hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors separately from one another to form a first sol and a second sol, and mixing the first and second sols to form inorganic monomers, the first hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors being different to the second hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors and having at least two hydrolysable groups, and the second hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors having at least one non-hydrolysable group;

(2) polymerising the polymerisable organic species; and

(3) polymerising the inorganic monomers, wherein polymerisation of the polymerisable organic species is initiated prior to completion of polymerisation of the inorganic monomers,

to form a solid coating on the substrate.

2.(Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein hydrolysis of the hydrolysable monomer precursors takes place in the presence of a mineral acid.

3.(Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors are alkoxides.

4. (Cancelled)

5.(Previously presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of the first hydrolysable monomer precursors: total of first and second hydrolysable monomer precursors is in the range 0.75 to 0.9 and the coating composition comprises at least 50 % by weight inorganic monomers.

6.(Previously presented) A process according to claim 5, wherein the molar ratio of the first hydrolysable monomer precursors: total of first and second hydrolysable monomer precursors is in the range 0.78 to 0.88.

7. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the first hydrolysable monomer precursors comprise a tetraalkoxysilane and the second hydrolysable monomer precursors comprise an alkoxysilane having at least one ethylenically-unsaturated group or an epoxy group.

8.(Original) A process according to claim 7, wherein the first hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors comprise tetraethoxysilane and the second hydrolysable precursors comprise 3-(trimethoxysilyl) propylmethacrylate.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the sol is aged prior to mixing with the polymerisable organic species.

11.(Previously presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the polymerisable organic monomers are added to the sol in liquid or solution form.

12. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the polymerisable organic species are polymerisable to form a thermoplastic material or a thermosetting material.

13. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 12, wherein the polymerisable organic species are selected from carbonates, urethanes, urethane precursors, urethane acrylates and terephthalates.

14. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the substrate is selected from thermoplastic materials and thermosetting materials, metals, ceramic materials, natural materials, or any of these materials which are pre-coated.

15. (Original) A process according to claim 14, wherein the substrate comprises a polycarbonate or a polyacrylic material.

16. (Currently amended) A coated substrate ~~obtainable~~ obtained by a process according to claim 1.

17. (Original) A coated substrate according to claim 16, wherein the coating is transparent.

18. (Currently amended) A coating composition comprising an homogeneous mixture comprising an inorganic sol and polymerisable organic species, the inorganic sol being ~~obtainable~~ obtained by hydrolysis of first and second hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors separately from one another to form a first sol and a second sol, and mixing the first and second sols to form inorganic monomers, the first hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors being different to the second hydrolysable inorganic monomer

precursors and having at least two hydrolysable groups, the second hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors having at least one non-hydrolysable group.

19 - 20. (Cancelled)

21. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 3, wherein the hydrolysable inorganic monomer precursors are alkoxysilanes.

22. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 13, wherein the polymerisable organic species are selected from isocyanates or diisocyanates and polyols.

23. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 14, wherein the substrate is pre-coated with a decorative finish.